



newsletter

SUMMER 2025



Feeding the Future

PROGRAMS' DYNAMIC DUO ARE A PERFECT PAIRING

At the heart of the Maryland Food Bank's impact is our programming—whether neighbors are receiving nutritious food through our partners' distributions or engaging with Maryland Food Bank programs that address the root causes of hunger and help move them toward lasting food security.

In a time marked by economic uncertainty, and proposed cuts to vital benefits like SNAP, our programs matter more than ever. This is why we introduced the first Senior Vice President-level co-leadership structure in our 46-year history—a move that reflects both innovation and intentionality in how we serve Marylanders.

As co-leaders of Programs, we work side by side to deliver holistic solutions that meet neighbors where they are, while strengthening the ecosystem of community partners and organizations that make our work possible.

Jennifer Small, Neighbor Engagement: Since joining the food bank in 2009 as Branch Manager of our Salisbury location, I have seen firsthand how deeply neighbors are impacted by programs that offer not only food but hope and dignity. Today, I lead teams focused on direct neighbor engagement—where Mobile Markets, FoodWorks, SNAP outreach, and nutrition education are helping move neighbors along a path toward lasting food security and long-term stability.

Emily Alt, Community Programs: Starting as one of Maryland Food Bank's first Regional Program Directors six years ago, I am proud of the increasing intentionality and thoughtfulness we've been able to apply to community food distribution programs during this time. As subject matter experts in their regions, my team works with food distribution partners across the state—trusted voices and advocates in their communities—building their capacity to create customized, neighbor-informed solutions.

Together, we bring a blend of lived experience, strategy, and shared vision to our co-leadership model. It is more than just dividing responsibilities; it is about amplifying impact. By collaborating across focus areas, we are better positioned to create a more equitable, resilient, and neighbor-centered food system for Maryland.

Most Sincerely,
Jennifer Small & Emily Alt

Jennifer Small



We see a brighter future for our state—one where there is a more equitable, resilient, accessible food system for all Marylanders.



Emily J. Alt

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***MFB* IN THE NOW**

From Annapolis to DC: Advocacy Activated

Advocacy is one of the most powerful catalysts for change. We're honored to elevate the voices of the vulnerable—locally in Annapolis for free school breakfasts & lunches for kids and nationally in Washington, DC, for the protection of SNAP and other key nutrition programs.

Visit mdfoodbank.org/advocacy to sign-up for updates!



Field Trips with All the Feels: MFB's Nutrition Education Workshops

MFB is pleased to offer nutrition education workshops for kids aged 5-18 years old. You can bring your group to our on-site Education & Demonstration Garden in Baltimore, or we can come to you! Your group will experience fun, hands-on activities that use gardening to teach nutrition and engage young people with fresh vegetables.



Contact nutrition@mdfoodbank.org for more information!

Philanthropic Freshman? Fabulous!

Freshman Izzy Maly recently assembled 10 members of Severna Park High School's Key Club and created an event to benefit neighbors in her community and the Maryland Food Bank.

Maly took the funds raised from her Community Pancake Fundraiser and partnered with Laurel, MD-based Pastry Star to produce 1,400 pouches of pancake mix, which can make up to 33,000 pancakes, providing critical sustenance to food-insecure Marylanders statewide. Maly hopes to extend the fundraiser to Key Clubs nationwide.



**HELP US
HELP YOU**



Visit mdfoodbank.org/survey and tell us about the outcomes, stories, and information you most care about!



Hunger is harmful to any individual, but to children, the effects can be life-altering. Younger neighbors are more vulnerable, and can suffer more impactful, long-term, negative consequences to their physical, mental, and social development without realistic solutions.

According to July 2024 U.S. Census data, there are just over 1.3 million children aged 18 and under living in Maryland.

Too many of those children experience hunger in our state, despite it being one of the wealthiest (#3 says U.S. News & World Report). Children had to rely on the food assistance safety net for more than 4,000,000 meals last year alone.

Thankfully, your contributions support 300+ incredible School & Higher Ed Pantry and Summer & Supper Club sites statewide that can help.

And at each one of those sites, there are passionate and dedicated people who simply want to help. They know that there is no one-size-fits-all solution, as each child (and family's) situation is different.

Here's a peek at a few community partners that are helping alleviate common root cause issues (lower wages, lack of affordable housing) and some of the additional systemic challenges that Black and Brown neighbors face (lack of access to nutritious food, viable job opportunities) that can lead to negative outcomes (developmental differences, poor performance).

Feeding Young Children is Elementary: Waverley's School Pantry

In the northwest corner of the region's "Golden Mile" gateway corridor into Frederick, Waverley Elementary School stands as the hub of a diverse, welcoming community that proudly personalizes its services, making them even more equitable to their predominantly Hispanic & Latino population.

"We moved into this new building three years ago, and it is literally open 24/7. We have staff that work overnight so we can host late-night events when people need us, especially now," said Julie Ivins, Waverley Elementary's Principal. **"I've been here for six years now, and our distributions have doubled in size – we used to serve about 500 students, and now it's about 1,000!"** she continued.



Caring for Kids of All Ages



Among those 1,000 students served are the children of mom Christian Castello, who recently moved to the Frederick area. "I really appreciate the kindness of the people who are here – and my kids really love the bananas, oranges, apples, and sometimes they even have strawberries. I just can't buy all those things myself, they are too expensive at the store," she shared.

One of the ways Waverley cares for their community is through "Table Talk," an educational event that takes place before each food distribution. The event features discussions about current issues, as well as connections to wraparound service partners including Centro Hispano de Frederick and Farm to School Frederick's "Veggie Van," which features live translation from Daniela Figueroa. "I feel fortunate to be here, helping translate and explain to parents how they can cook and serve new foods to their children. I am in service to the community, closing the gap between the provider and the family who is in need," Daniela said.

Following Table Talk, Marilyn Vega couldn't wait to get home and start transforming what she picked up into a traditional squash stew from her home country. "My family is Peruvian, and we are used to having a lot of fresh food, so this is very surprising - I will make Locro de Zapallo with this blue catfish, which is one of my son's favorites!"

Waverley Elementary is one of 185 sites statewide that host School Pantries, so families can access nutritious foods and other services in a stigma-free, dignified, and convenient location. But what happens when school is not in session? Never fear! Summer and Supper Clubs are here!

School's Out? Summer & Supper Clubs are in!

During the school year, Supper Clubs offer parents a reliable destination where their kids engage in programming to keep them happy, healthy and on-track academically, while receiving nutritious meals. And when that final dismissal bell rings in June, Summer Clubs offer sports, arts and crafts and other activities, alongside healthy breakfasts and lunches.

Parents know the challenges of making nutritious meals that their kids will actually eat. Now imagine trying to please 50 kids with food that not only looks, smells, and tastes good, but also follows USDA guidelines for nutrition – that's the challenge that our Executive Chef and Meals Program Director Marcia Spencer faces each and every week.

And if the feedback from a Club site in Western Maryland is any indication, Chef Marcia's team is passing with flying colors!

"We've been partners with the Maryland Food Bank for many, many years, and appreciate the partnership, and the value that it adds to our after-school program with the meals, as well as food for our community."

— Karen Wells, Manager, Salvation Army, Cumberland Corps

Chef Marcia and her team research, plan, and taste-test dozens of meals each year to keep kids full and fulfilled. Recently, funding from the Wawa Foundation has allowed them to do even more! "Wawa's 'Fly Beyond' grant let's us supplement meals like Curry Chicken Salad with Lime with fresh fruits & vegetables, and other nutritious sides & snacks," said Chef Marcia.

A Higher (Ed) Calling

"I'm here at Retriever Essentials because I have a lot of financial obligations. Coming here saves money on groceries, so I can handle things. And they have things like beans, tomatoes and even this silken tofu – it's so beautiful here," shared sophomore Jennifer O.

Jennifer is one of thousands of University of Maryland, Baltimore County (UMBC) students that accessed more than 85,000 meals and other necessities at Retriever Essentials, UMBC's "Campus Pantry."

Michael Fakus, who has been a co-leader of the pantry since last summer, has been helping other students access food since he entered school in the fall of 2020. "COVID forced me and other students to pick up food from a 'modified pantry,' which was actually the trunks of faculty members' cars," Michael recalls.

But since the pantry's return to a physical space inside The Commons (UMBC's community center), they've partnered with MFB to bring in food that students can count on and actually want. "It may seem like a little thing, but when our Indian students see that we have Maggi noodles in stock, they are just so happy," Michael shared.

"My days are so busy, and my money so tight, I don't think I would be able to eat right without being able to get things like rice, and free cafeteria meals from Essentials," one senior said.

And based on suggestions from students, Retriever Essentials offers clothing, toiletries, and a "shared meal swipe" system which allows students to share excess meals with other students. UMBC is one of 17 Higher Education or Campus Pantries statewide.





FoodWorks' twelve-week, intensive curriculum focuses on both knife and life skills, producing well-rounded, professional chefs capable of thriving in any culinary setting.



FoodWorks for Bria Evans

FoodWorks gave Bria Evans a fresh start after she lost her job in physical therapy, and now she is literally giving others the same opportunity through her own 501(c)3 nonprofit organization.

Fresh Start Mobile Services offers hot meals and showers to hundreds of her neighbors in need each month.

"I am appreciative of the FoodWorks program, and especially the connection to The Open Society, which funded my dream of opening a mobile service for people without housing. I appreciate (former FoodWorks case manager) Dani, because I'm not sure this would be without her," Bria said.

Incredibly, Fresh Start is a passion project for Bria! During the day, she is mentoring the next generation of culinary creators through the Requity Foundation, where she serves as the Director of Operations and Head Chef.

"When I was in the program, I never envisioned being in the role of trainer - but here I am, using my notes, books, ServSafe Food Handler Certification, and everything that I

learned at FoodWorks to train 11th and 12th graders from Carver Vocational-Technical High School so they can be better, and have a future," Bria recalled.

Each week, Bria welcomes interns from neighboring Carver to give them invaluable, hands-on experience, while giving back to the community.

"There are 'We all eat Wednesdays,' where we plan, prep, and prepare meals and deliver them to the community for free," she noted. "And on top of that, we sometimes cater for Johns Hopkins University, host brunches, PTA events and things like that, and it benefits everyone," Bria continued.

From career training and wraparound support that have a positive impact on individuals like Bria, as well as Maryland's communities and businesses, the difference FoodWorks makes is delicious.

Support all MFB programs, including FoodWorks at mdfoodbank.org/summernews





Upcoming Events

MFB experiences are a great way for you to learn more about food banking, and an opportunity for us to get to know more about your vision for a hunger-free Maryland.



FoodWorks Culinary Experience: September, 10, 2025



A hands-on cooking event in the FoodWorks Culinary Training Kitchen, led by Chef Monique Jordan. Guests will cook together and share a meal to celebrate community and good food.

Fall Donor Volunteer Event: Saturday, October 11, 2025



Volunteers of all ages can help our Farm to Food Bank program harvest fresh produce for food-insecure neighbors. Spend time with your family while helping local families in need!

Coffee Talk: Fall 2025 (Date TBD)

An in-person and virtual event featuring the Maryland Food Bank CEO, highlighting efforts to build a more equitable food system.



Giving Tuesday: Tuesday, December 2, 2025

The Giving Tuesday Telethon is our premier year-end fundraiser. WBAL-TV, 98 Rock, WBAL News Radio and corporate sponsors help raise funds and awareness to fight hunger.

Holiday Donor Volunteer Event: Saturday, December 6, 2025



This family-friendly volunteer event focuses on repackaging bulk food into family-sized portions for distribution through our statewide network of community partners.



Kat Thomas
VP, PHILANTHROPY

Email me: kthomas@mdfoodbank.org
for more information!

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